



Newsflash - Support House No. 136

# MetroWest Center for Independent Living, Inc.

## Employment Issues

Please contact your legislators, and ask them to support House No. 136: An Act to Increase the Commonwealth's Compliance with Federal Law Meeting Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. People with disabilities continue to have the worst employment rates of any group in the U.S. With the help of new federal laws and state laws, we can fix this problem.

If you can, attend the hearing next Tuesday!

To find your legislator's contact information, visit [wheredoivotema.com](http://wheredoivotema.com).

from Paul W. Spooner,  
Executive Director of MWCIL



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## Action Alert

### State Contractors Should Have Same Rules as Federal Contractors!

The US Department of Labor has just announced new rules for federal contractors that set a hiring goal for people with disabilities and measures federal contractors' progress toward achieving equal opportunity for people with disabilities and protected veterans:

- The [Section 503 rule](#) introduces a hiring goal for federal contractors and subcontractors that 7 percent of each job group in their workforce be qualified individuals with disabilities.
- The [VEVRAA rule](#) provides contractors with a quantifiable metric to measure their success in recruiting and employing veterans by requiring contractors to annually adopt a benchmark

Our state contractors should be following similar rules. Please contact your legislators and/or testify at the upcoming hearing in support of HOUSE No. 136: An Act to Increase the Commonwealth's Compliance with Federal Law Meeting Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Hearing for House No. 136

When:

Tuesday, September 10th, 10:00 a.m. -3:00 p.m.

Where:

B-1 (Basement hearing room- at the accessible entrance)  
State House, Boston.

### Calendar

[IL Conference](#)

September 17-19

[MWCIL Fundraiser  
Gala and Awards](#)

Friday, November 15

### Donations

If you appreciate MWCIL and the support it provides you, please consider a gift of any amount. By showing your appreciation and giving back, MWCIL can provide more services for the community. We thank you! Go to [MWCIL Webpage](#) or click on the Donate button.

[Donate](#)



All online gifts are tax deductible. **We couldn't carry out our important mission without you!**

Call and/or email the members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development and ask the legislators to please support HOUSE Bill No. 136: An Act to Increase the Commonwealth's Compliance with Federal Law Meeting Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

[Click Here](#) for the Labor and Workforce Development committee members' contact information.

From Joe Bellil: [jbllil@eastersealsma.org](mailto:jbllil@eastersealsma.org).

Thanks to the DPC.

## Let's Level The Playing Field This Labor Day!

I remember worrying about getting a job when I was in fourth grade. I saw my classmates doing paper routes and landscaping jobs to earn money, while my options were limited. I had polio and did not have the use of my legs.

When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed, I felt that the employment flood gates would open, businesses would become more aware and companies would be recruiting people with disabilities to fill jobs. That didn't happen. Don't get me wrong, I am grateful for the ADA as well as the many other laws that have helped level the playing field, but it's still not a fair game. The employment rate for people with disabilities since passage of the ADA has not really changed. The statistics that I usually hear are that only 1 in 5 people with disabilities are employed and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is twice that of the general rate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). This is not fair or right! We haven't even entered the ballpark, never mind about getting on the field.

The new federal contractor rules are not a panacea, but they give us a chance to play in the game. These rules are not perfect and I've already heard from people with and without disabilities complaining about various issues. I ask you to think about this - the first time federal contractors actually have an incentive (a business reason) to hire people with disabilities. These contractors, the Wall Street Journal estimates that there are around 200,000 of them, will have to take steps to become more aware of and to hire people with disabilities. And why not? Shouldn't we expect companies, who are paid by our tax dollars, to hire people who are qualified and who have disabilities? We expect programs and facilities paid by our taxes to be accessible.

We in Massachusetts also have a chance to create incentives for our state contractors. Imagine if both federal and state contractors have incentives to hire people with disabilities. What's next, could there be a change of culture in the private sector? Would businesses be the ones advocating to Social Security to fix work incentives and to make public communication and transportation more accessible for their employees? Would the business community lobby legislators for more funding for assistive technology, work training programs, education, accessible housing, etc.?

One can only dream- well, we actually can make this a reality!

by Joe Bellil

Thanks to the DPC.

### *About Us:*

**MWCIL website**

(past issues are available at our website)

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## NEW Federal Employment Rules

The U.S. Department of Labor today announced two final rules to improve hiring and employment of veterans and for people with disabilities. The VEVRRA rule updates requirements for hiring veterans. The Section 503 (under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) requires 7 percent of employees working for federal contractors (who employ at least 50 people, and have \$50,000 in contracts) should have a disability. If a parent corporation has a federal contract, even its non-contracting subsidiaries must comply. If the rules work as intended, many, many more jobs should become available for people with disabilities. (See the [U.S. Labor Dept. news release](#))

Most news articles seem nervous about the new rules, even though the Labor Department says that companies need goals and recruitment strategies, at least at first, rather than actual numbers. Yet, one article even describes the rules as a "neutron bomb for a defense contractor".

One valid concern is that some disabilities don't show, and that employees may not want to volunteer that information. And employers may not want to risk discrimination lawsuits by asking employees and applicants about disabilities. However, companies will need to know who has what disability in order to prove compliance.

Overall, we think that if companies comply with the law, and actually try to hire people with disabilities, they will be pleasantly surprised with the results... who knows... maybe they'll even go over the 7%!

Sources:

Cleveland.com: [Feds' new disability-hiring rule could broadly affect businesses, some worry](#)

Cleveland.com: [Feds want 7 percent of contractor workforce composed of people with disabilities](#)

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month - October

"Because We Are EQUAL to the Task" is the theme of this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Chosen by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the theme reflects the reality that people with disabilities have the education, training, experience and desire to be successful in the workplace."

Read the entire [news release](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Visit the [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) for a comprehensive list of national policy resources, statistics, programs and more.

Visit "[What Can You Do?](#)" - the national Campaign for Disability Employment. This site has information and resources for employers, people with disabilities, youth, families and educators.

## Raise the Bar HIRE!

### Work Without Limits Conference

Learn how you can raise the bar higher to advance the employment of

people with disabilities. Featuring exhibitors, networking opportunities, and break-out sessions for a full day of learning, sharing and engaging with industry leaders. [Click Here](#) for more information.

When:

Tuesday, October 8, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Where:

Four Points by Sheraton  
1125 Boston-Providence Turnpike (Route 1)  
Norwood

Registration:

Register [online](#). Fees vary,

## Employment First: From Vision to Reality ADDP Mini Conference

Employment programs serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are continuing to evolve every day. This conference offers a broad range of speakers and participants in an effort to affect the redesigning of employment opportunity and services in MA. [Click Here](#) for more information, or [download](#) the email invitation.

When:

Friday, November 1, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Where:

Conference Center at Bentley University  
175 Forest Street  
Waltham, MA

Registration:

[Online](#) - \$75

## 2nd Annual MWCIL Gala Fundraiser

Please join us as we honor Bill Henning, BCIL executive director, as an exceptional contributor to independent living and Liz Casey for her lifetime achievements. Spend time with friends, roast Karen Spilka, and have a great meal.

When:

Friday, November 15, 2013, 5:30 p.m.

Where:

Sheraton Tara, Framingham

Tickets:

\$100 per person

Please visit our [webpage](#) for all the details on how you can become a sponsor.

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